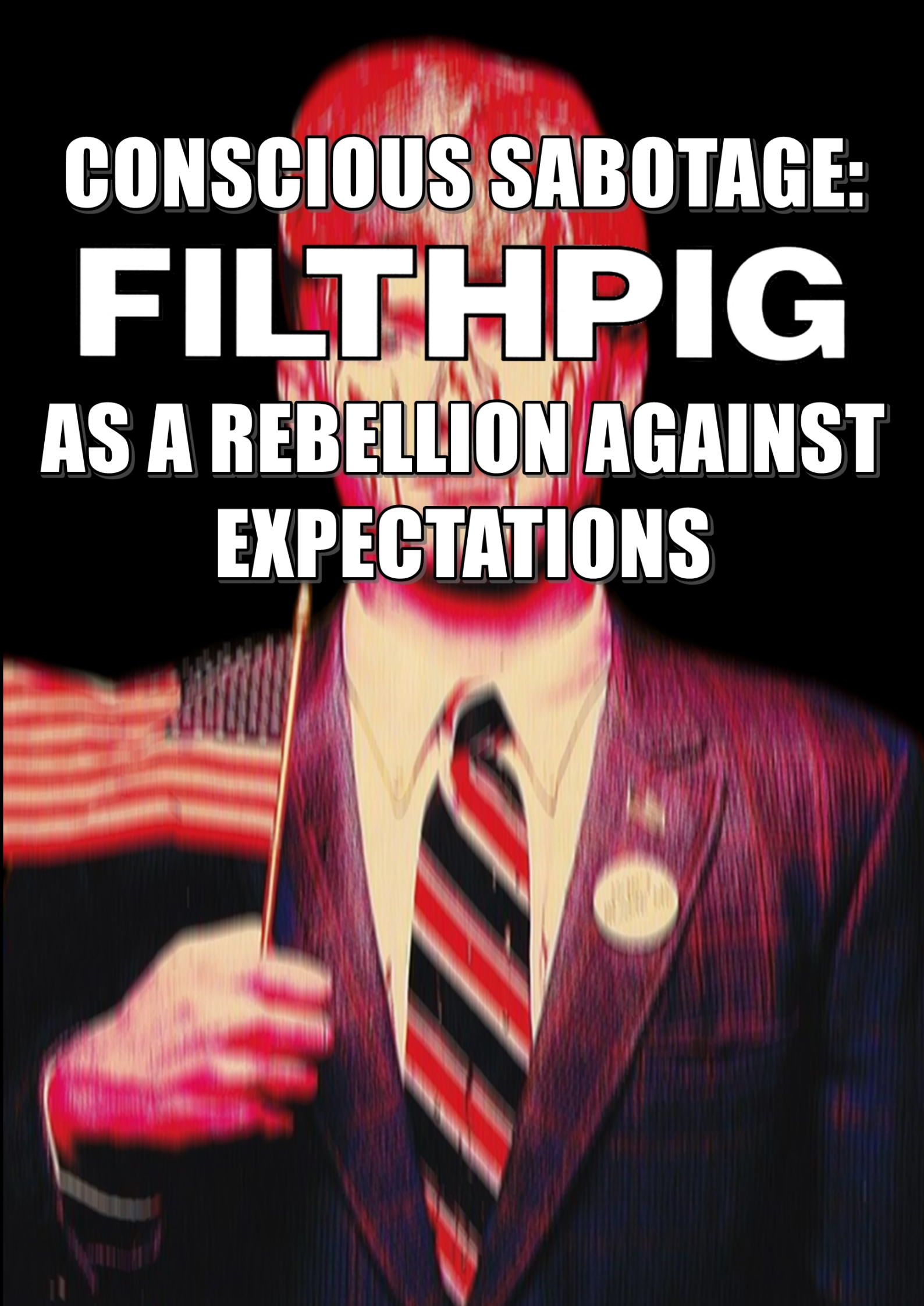

CONSCIOUS SABOTAGE:
FILTHPIG
AS A REBELLION AGAINST
EXPECTATIONS

01 Misunderstood by Design

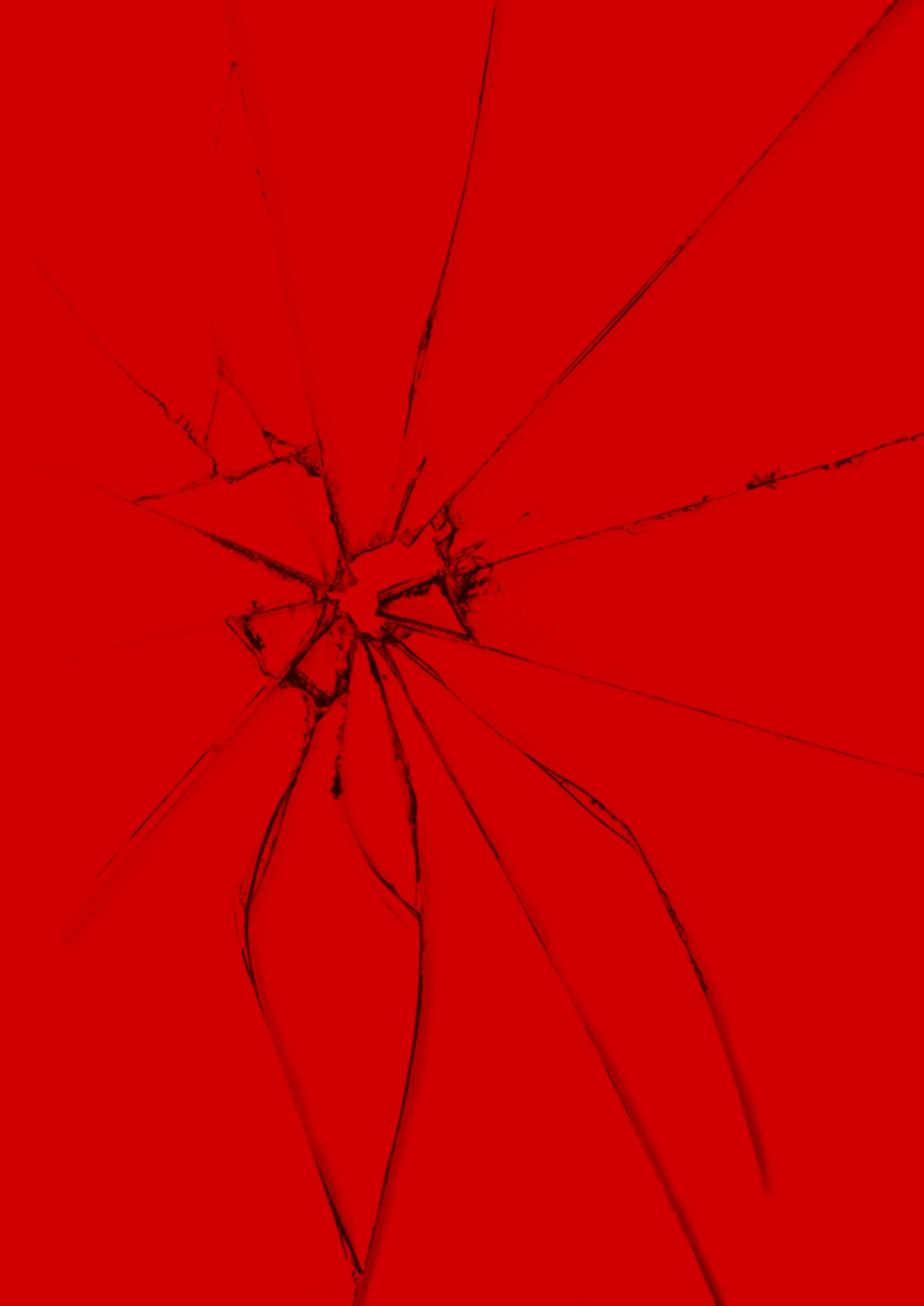
02 The Cost of Breaking Through

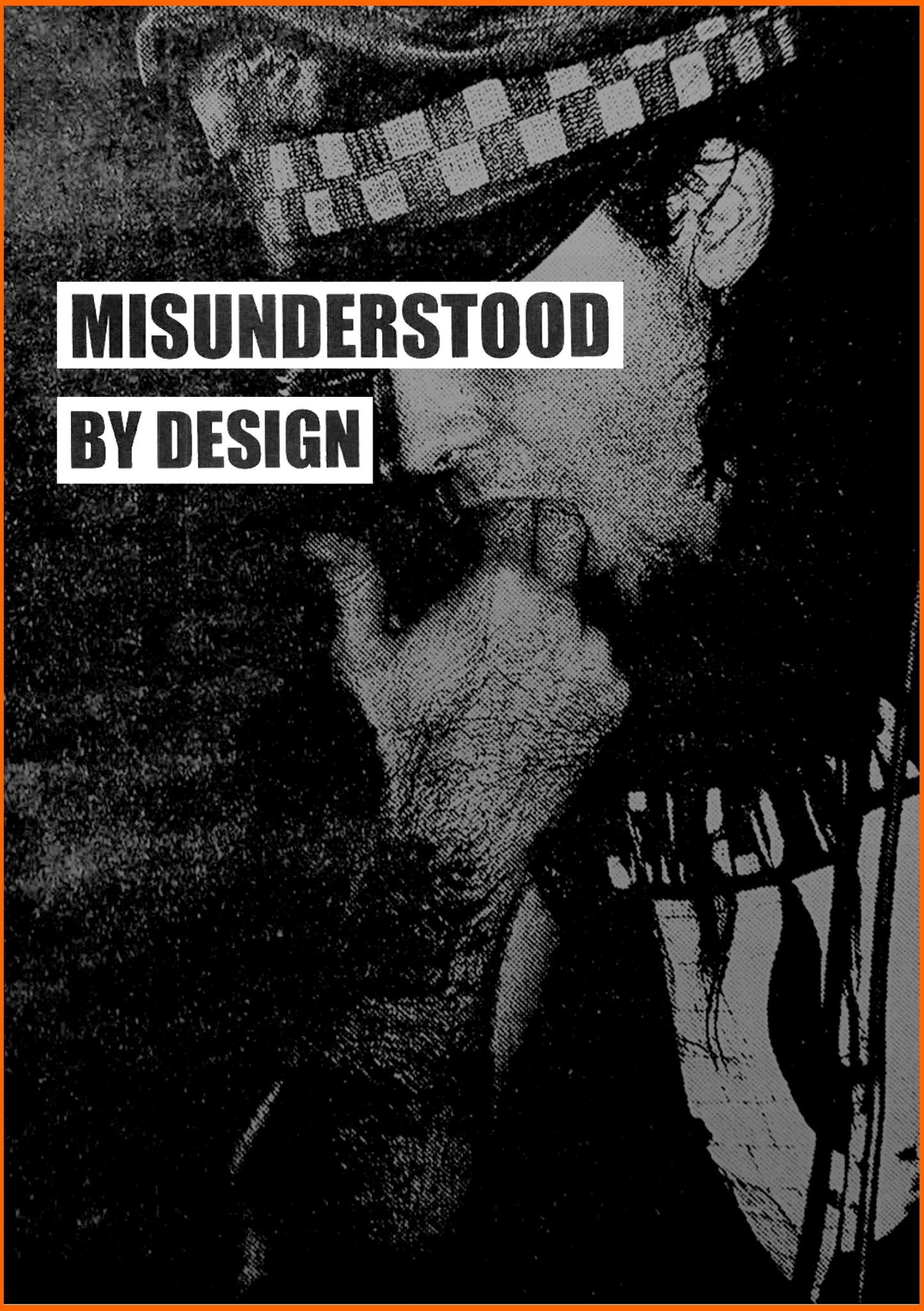
03 Initial Reception vs. Retrospective Acclaim

04 The Sound as Defiance and Nihilism in the Lyrical Content

05 Choosing Personal Ideals over Commercial Success

06 The Album's Value in My Interpretation



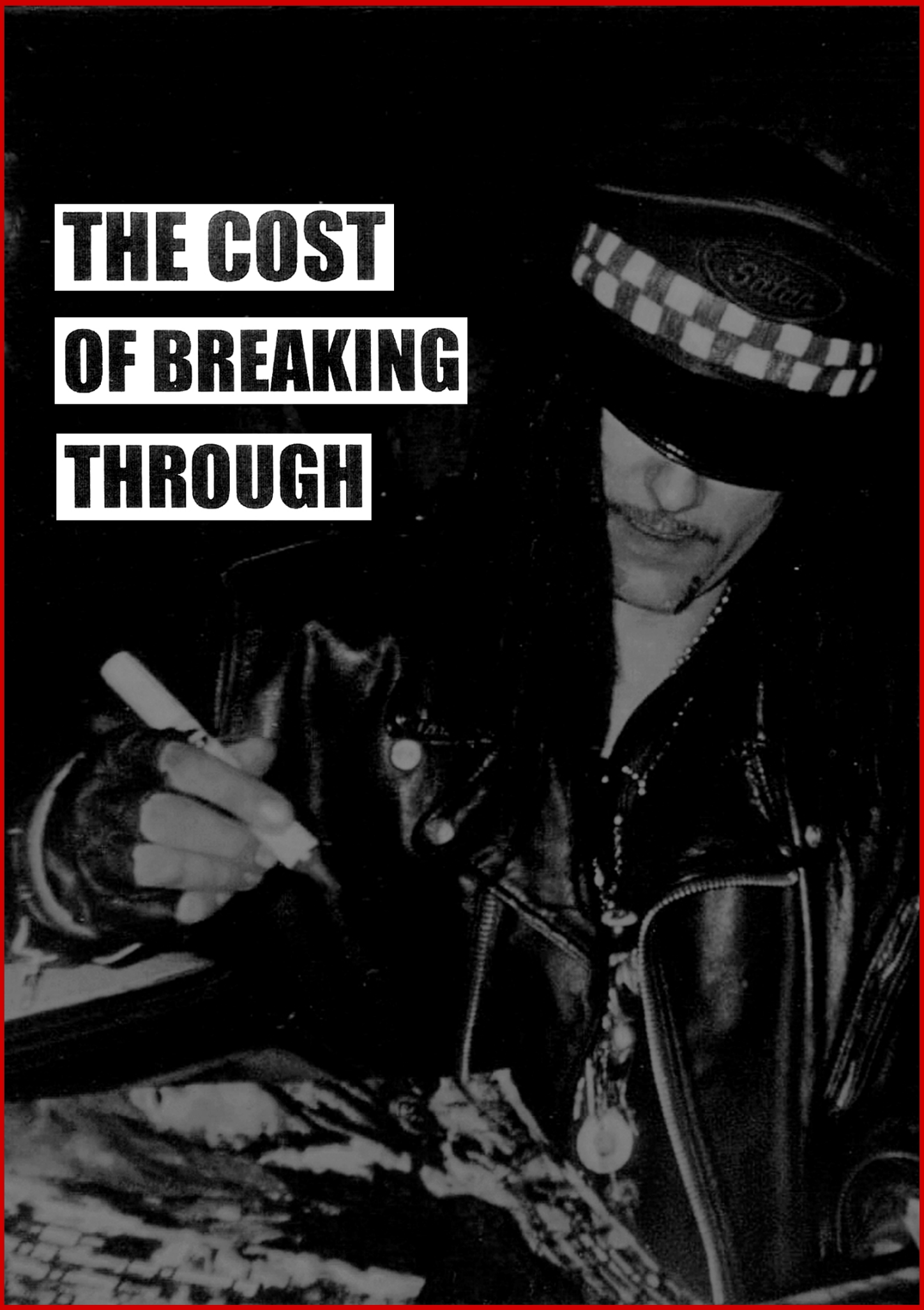

MISUNDERSTOOD
BY DESIGN

After the enormous commercial success of *Psalm 69: The Way to Succeed and the Way to Suck Eggs* in 1992 (a record that proved downright groundbreaking for the culture of the time), the media set the bar for Ministry exceptionally high. The press, the label, and the fans all expected a repeat—an album just as aggressive, fast, and uncompromising as its predecessor. This strategy is safe, profitable, and frequently employed by musicians, often treated by record labels as the only sensible move in an artist's continued career. Al Jourgensen, however, is not a figure known for taking the easy route or for predictability, something the mainstream had apparently forgotten and was consequently taken aback by.

Released in 1996, *Filth Pig* does not assault the listener with aggression nor does it sow chaos outright. It is a far less accessible album, not only for the average listener, but, as it turned out, also for the band's fans. Its sound is oppressively heavy, portraying an inner sense of emptiness, disintegration, and self-disgust. Instead of attacking the outside world, the album draws the listener into a slow journey through states of mind that one would usually prefer to leave unspoken.

The record has often been regarded as a misstep or even a failure, especially by those who expected another *Psalm 69*. It's a simple misunderstanding of the intent with which it was recorded. It was not an unsuccessful attempt to recreate the success of its predecessor, but a conscious rejection of industry pressure, a deliberate move in the exact opposite direction of what was expected, fully aligned with the band's vision.

THE COST OF BREAKING THROUGH



Ministry had already caused quite a stir even before the release of *Psalm 69* with their 1989 album *The Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Taste*, promoted by one of the most legendary tours in the band's history. The group was separated from the audience by a massive metal cage; the lineup included two drummers and three guitarists, and special guests joined the band: Nivek Ogre, vocalist of Skinny Puppy, and Jello Biafra from Dead Kennedys.

The label felt the band was just one step away from a breakthrough. At the same time, alternative music, previously treated somewhat poorly by the media, was beginning to move into the mainstream. Tool, Soundgarden, Nirvana, and Smashing Pumpkins were achieving enormous success, making Ministry appear next in line.

The pressure from the label grew, along with the appetite for drugs. Major record labels had equally massive budgets and in the '90s, they certainly weren't shy about using them. Ministry worked on the album at Chicago Trax!, a studio that, with a colossal advance from Sire, was absurdly cheap. However, the entire budget quickly disappeared either up their noses or into their veins. For long stretches, they recorded hours of white noise and were completely unproductive due to a constant state of intoxication.

The first and only track they managed to complete at the time was *Jesus Built My Hotrod*, featuring Gibby Haynes of Butthole Surfers on vocals. Sire's reaction was predictably negative. The song had an obviously humorous character, which wasn't what the label expected from the band. On top of that, by the time the label received the track, little of the advance money was left.

Jourgensen remained steadfast, insisting that the label release the song as a single and grant the band another advance, or terminate the contract. Sire ultimately agreed. The single became a massive success and remains one of Ministry's most recognizable songs to this day. The band, of course, received another advance and was left alone to do its own thing. In Al's world, there was no room for "no," unless he was the one saying it.

Psalm 69 remains Ministry's most famous album. It achieved colossal commercial success, reaching number 27 on the Billboard 200 in the U.S. and number 33 on the UK Albums Chart. The next single, *N.W.O.*, was nominated for "Best Metal Performance" at the 35th Annual Grammy Awards. But with great success came great problems, as Jourgensen would quickly find out.

"At the time, a lot of bands that were considered garage punk or underground were going gold and platinum certified. But the success of Psalm 69 really blew me away. It actually made me go legally insane for a couple of years and drown my sorrows in the needle, if you know what I mean. [Laughs]" **— Al *(Revolver Magazine, 2015)***

In his own words, Al "sold out" long before achieving mainstream success. His first album released under the Ministry name, *With Sympathy*, released in 1983 by Arista Records, long provoked disgust at the mere thought of it. He repeatedly emphasized that after signing the contract, he was stripped of all creative control over his own material. The label interfered not only with the album's sound but also with his image, dictating both the style and the lineup of musicians deemed "commercially suitable."

As a result, it was Arista's vision, not Jourgensen's, that was realized. Despite formally remaining the project's author, he was in practice reduced to the role of its face: a puppet and future profit machine. This experience, which he described almost in terms of trauma, had a decisive impact on his later artistic decisions. It is hardly surprising, then, that after such an episode, yielding to label pressure became absolutely unacceptable to him.

The way *Filth Pig* sounds was not only dictated by the circumstances it was created in. It was clearly the result of both Al's rebellious nature and the need to explore new territories, as well as a long-standing internal conflict regarding his artistic identity, initiated by his first, exploitative contract.

AL... WHAT'S THE MATTER?...

INITIAL RECEPTION

VS. RETOSPECTIVE

ACCLAIM

MINISTRY
KERBDOG
Brixton Academy, London
Thursday, July 18

MOST ROCKING MOMENT:
A magnificent version of 'Thieves'.

LEAST ROCKING MOMENT:
Take your pick... 'Just One Fix' was rubbish, 'The Fall' went on for about two days, and so on...

BEST ONSTAGE QUOTE:
"Oh, so you like the last ones, huh? Okay, we'll do a slow one..." – Al Jourgensen aiming to please.

VERDICT:
We can wait another four years.

3/5

WITH GODFLESH suffering from a dose of f... poisoning and hence unable to play, it's up ... Kerbdog to open tonight to a hostile audien... have all had to struggle here through a crip... strike. It's a fairly pointless exercise and on... the Kilkenny trio's bravery, because while t... very good form this evening – and backed u... fantastic sound – the majority of the audien... decided that they don't like K... ar... the mood to be won over. Like... us... Biohazard support, this is just... sh... them; no matter how well th... wo... home many fans.

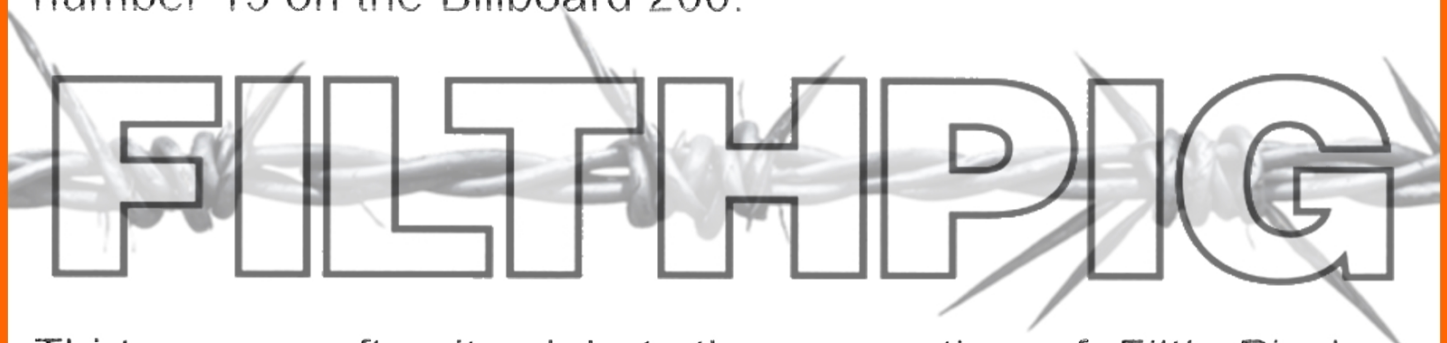
Then again, neither will Min... years since they last played t... the minds of a sold-out Brixto... was, at the time, the hottest t... (even accounting for the tube... poor, and so are Ministry.

After an over-long build-up ... tantalise but merely irritates, t... 'Psalm 69', and all appears we... not the best Ministry song ever – but hey, they are actually here at last, frontman Al Jourgensen taking ...ge and looking like Satan's ...ongs in, though, and you be... ...sn't the same glorious head... ...d the world to the ground ... 'Filth Pig' album was disapp... ... and the likes of 'Lava' don'... ...e set. No, the problem is th... ...ying badly, apparently stru... ...t all. There are precious fe... ...e close to their previous br... ...that are almost painful. Wh... with 'Full Metal Jacket' sa... ...nt and totally in your face, ... Fix' are absolutely atrocious... ...d be nice. How difficult can... ...you're using samples? Mi... ...st band on the planet; now t... ...indicate a change from ve... ...efyingly obvious drumbeats... ... finish with a sloppy 'Stigma... ... Al Jourgensen's last "F**k ... ...wishing we'd gone to the Ph... day earlier. It's that simple.

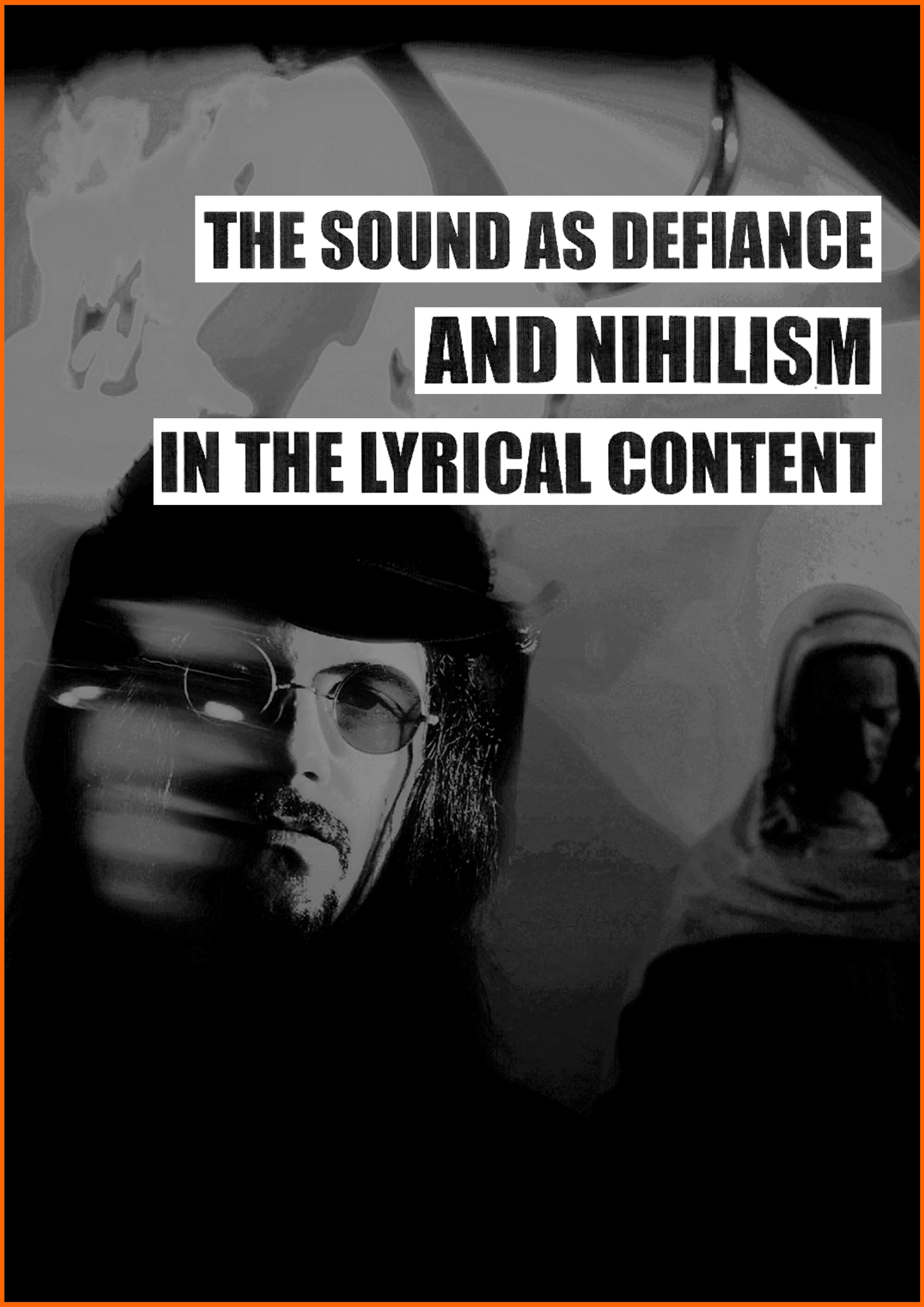
MÖRAT

Fans had to wait three and a half years for the release of the follow-up to the iconic, platinum-selling album. When *Filth Pig* finally saw the light of day, it turned heads, and not necessarily in a positive way. No one was prepared for how overwhelming its sound and lyrical content would turn out to be, and because of such a drastic change, the album sharply divided listeners. A small group embraced it with enthusiasm, while the rest dismissed it as boring, disappointing, or directionless.

Critics hated *Filth Pig* because it was essentially the opposite of the industrial sound that, in their view, had already reached its peak on *Psalm 69*. Its follow-up was widely seen as a disappointment compared to expectations and, needless to say, did not match the success of its predecessor. Yet, despite weak sales, it still climbed to the highest chart positions in Ministry's history in the United States, reaching number 19 on the Billboard 200.



Thirty years after its debut, the perception of *Filth Pig* has changed dramatically. The album that initially took so many aback is now regarded as a classic. Yesterday's critics are today's ardent converts. A lot of fans say that, although they were unimpressed with it at first, it now holds the top spot for them in Ministry's entire discography. Recordings from the tour promoting the album, captured on the 2002 live release *Sphinctour*, have become nearly as legendary as the iconic *In Case You Didn't Feel Like Showing Up* from 1990, recorded during the tour for *The Mind Is a Terrible Thing to Taste*. Better late than never…


THE SOUND AS DEFIANCE
AND NIHILISM
IN THE LYRICAL CONTENT

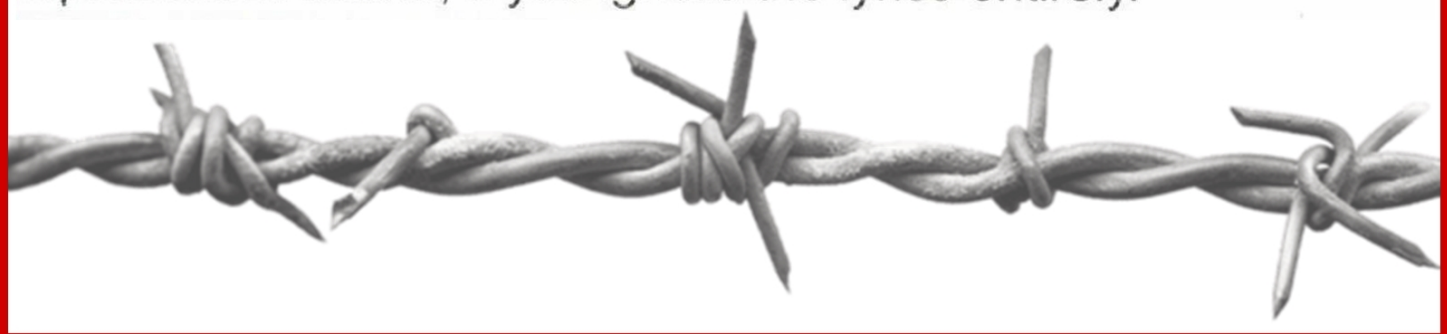
Before Ministry released *Filth Pig*, their music was primarily associated with being packed full of samples, which had been a staple of their work ever since the 1986 release *Twitch*. So, naturally, when they set out to make a record that rejected everything familiar, the samples were almost completely thrown out the window. Another element that mostly disappeared was electronics, with the sessions featuring more guitars and fewer drum machines and synths than before. The focus was on stripped-down arrangements and recording live in the studio, giving the album a sound that was completely different. It was dirtier, sludgier, and therefore far from the "classic industrial" style.

"There is a myriad of degrees of expression within any particular field. We don't have the passion to do work specifically or exclusively with electronic sounds. Our whole idea is to do whatever it takes to make the music right for us. We don't care what that is. We don't care if it's a fucking mandolin or a jackhammer. Who cares?"
— Barker *(Industrial Nation #12, 1996)*

One of the few up-tempo tracks, *Reload*, the album's opener, feels like a final nod to what once was but is now gone. It was released as a single and received a music video, one of only two made for tracks from this album. The title track is the complete opposite. Slow, crushing and suffocatingly heavy, with a beautifully resonant bassline and a harrowing harmonica solo, that, in Jourgensen's hands, I always call the "evil harmonica," because it literally sounds sinister. It will forever remain my favorite track. The instrumental layer gives it an unbelievably haunting, unsettling character that perfectly complements the lyrics, reflecting the author's anguished state of mind. Who can guess who the Filth Pig is? Both *Lava* and *Crumbs* are so grainy that if you grit your teeth while listening, you can almost feel sand between them. The latter also features a rather unusual time signature, just like *Reload*.

Useless is a truly exceptional track, mainly because Paul Barker—the bassist, producer, and engineer for Ministry, as well as a partner in crime on Al's side projects—takes on the role of vocalist. The song was written by him, drummer Bill Rieflin, and guitarist Mike Scaccia. Jourgensen really liked the music they had composed but wasn't sure what to do with the vocals. Since Barker was determined to have the track on the record, he ended up singing it himself—a brilliant move. *Dead Guy* is clearly autobiographical, with vocals that are almost "barked," at times bordering on rap. *Game Show*, on the other hand, is a nearly eight-minute epic whose structure resembles a slowly rising wave, only to crash against the rocks at the end.

Then comes *The Fall*. A track originally created for the WELT project with Nivek Ogre, which ultimately never came to fruition. Al has said that when he wrote it, he already knew it was the song he wanted at his own death services, which speaks volumes about the emotional intensity contained in the track. After the introspective weight of *The Fall*, the album moves toward reinterpretation. It's well known that Ministry has a thing for covers, and *Filth Pig* features one as well, namely *Lay Lady Lay*, originally by Bob Dylan. In contrast to the delicate original, their version is far more explosive while still retaining its warmth. My favorite detail is the lyric change: *"Why wait any longer for the one you love when he's standing* ***over*** *you?"*. The final track, *Brick Windows*, is just as explosive as its predecessor, yet it sounds surprisingly light, almost optimistic… that is, if you ignore the lyrics entirely.



A song that came out of the *Filth Pig* sessions and that I think has to be mentioned is *Paisley*. It has to be the slowest track Ministry has ever recorded. Although it didn't make the album, it was released as the B-side to *Lay Lady Lay* and appeared on the *Escape from L.A.* soundtrack. It's a beautiful, dark track with a drowsy quality to it, recorded so that the vocals sound as if they're coming from another room, through glass, or from underwater. The entire melody is simply hypnotic.

What primarily sets this album apart from the rest of Ministry's body of work, aside from the dramatic change in BPM, is the nature of its lyrics. Ministry's music has usually served as a kind of medium for speaking truths about politics, corruption, kleptocracy, media manipulation, and broadly defined social decay. The anger and frustration that seem to boil out of their songs are aimed mostly at the outside world. On this album, however, it's hard not to notice the pervasive sense of self-loathing. Of course, you can find tracks that touch on more personal themes on previous albums too; motifs of alienation, isolation, and/or drug use had already appeared in Ministry's lyrics before 1996. However it's only on *Filth Pig* that you can truly feel how terrible the taste of Jourgensen's mind must have been.

"I had a $500-a-day addiction. I was going through a divorce, and I had just had a child. I didn't really get along with Barker or the rest of my bandmates. It was a pretty crazy period and a pretty crazy record. It's obvious when you listen… it's definitely not Psalm 70. [Laughs] It's really the sound of a depressed guy on his deathbed. I was a crazy heroin addict at the time, so the riffs I was doing weren't exactly up-tempo. To me, Filth Pig is a pretty true mirror of what was going on in my life at that time."

— Al *(Revolver Magazine, 2015)*

Even at its most aggressive, the lyrics often feel detached. There is no attempt to make them catchy, quotable, or even fully comprehensible. This album comes across as a kind of farewell letter, or a series of diary entries that suddenly stop, leaving you unsettled and wondering what happened to their author. I think that if *The Fall* was the closing track, more people would notice that the album's narrative is, in a way, similar to Nine Inch Nails' *The Downward Spiral* from 1994, which follows a character whose life ends in suicide.

You want to lie like a dog
You're going to wake up with fleas

So how the fuck do I dream at night?
With the memories of a borrowed death, the guilty past

Reaching for my throat to coddle, then throttle

Remove all hope

Another day, another knife in the back
It's happened so many times, I stopped trying to keep track

You ask me questions, I already know
The time has finally come to let it go

Sweet all alone
in alienation

Everything is useless, nothing works at all
Nothing ever matters, welcome to the fall

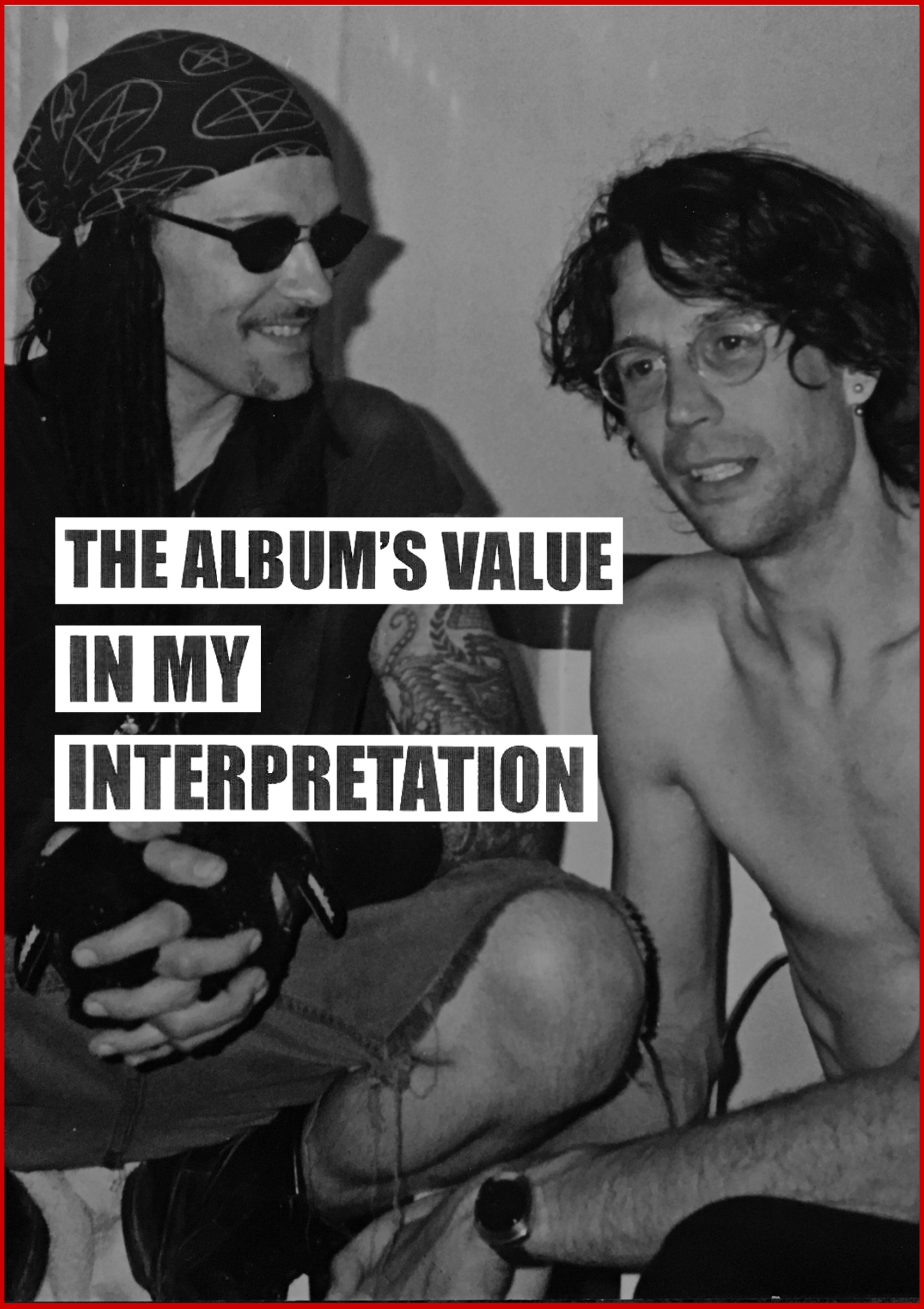
I am sticking
my face
right through
the glass
Just trying
to see
if the world's
alive

CHOOSING
PERSONAL IDEALS
OVER
COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

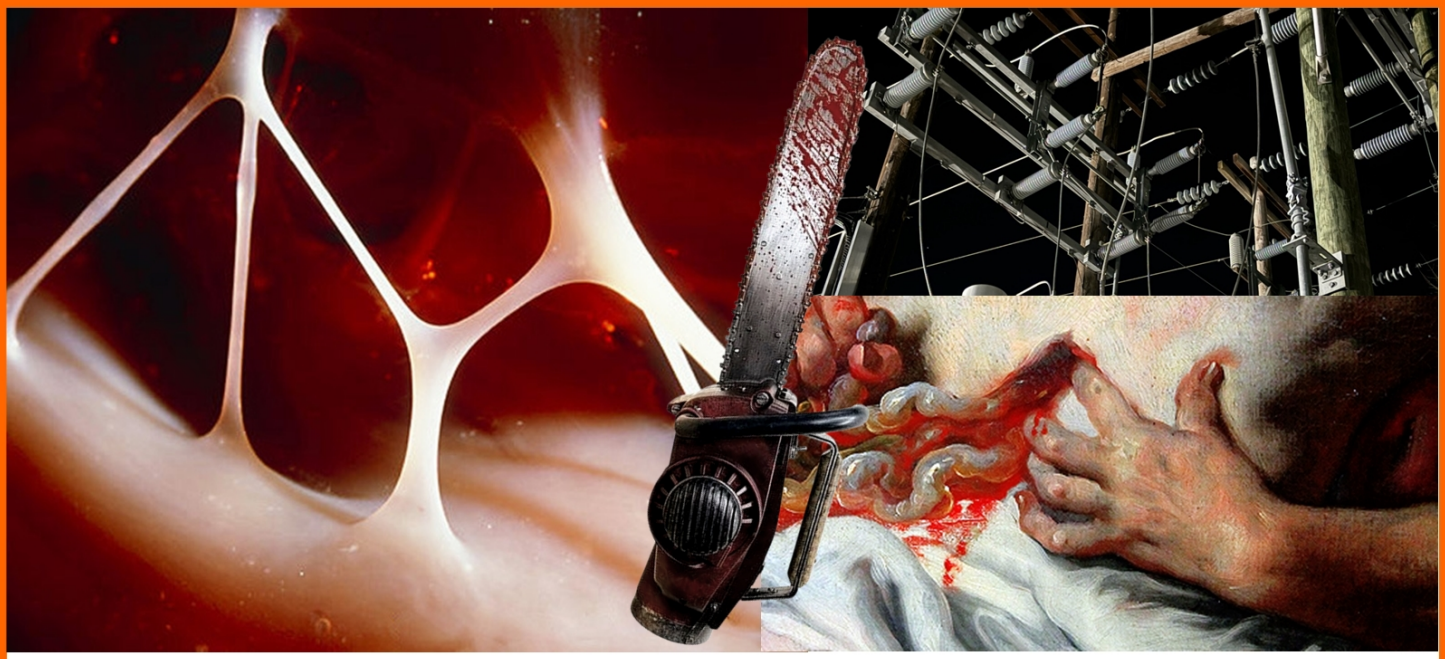
When money and fame become the primary drivers of creation, what truly matters inevitably recedes into the background. The moment art becomes purely a product, something essential is lost. Authenticity is the foundation. True success for an artist should not be measured by sales or popularity, because it is achieved when a work expresses exactly what they intended, in the form they intended, without yielding to external pressures. A true artist remains loyal to themselves and their vision. Moreover, they do not stand still; they constantly evolve, take risks, push boundaries, and resist imposed rules—even if it means facing negative reception.

Al Jourgensen is a perfect example of an artist in the truest sense. When he fell into the trap of a profit-driven contract that took away his ability to express himself in the way he truly wanted, he could no longer look at himself in the mirror. Once he escaped that trap, he evolved with each subsequent album and did not allow anyone but himself to influence his artistic decisions. This attitude took him both to the heights of fame and to rock bottom, but no matter what, he kept his word and never became "a human photocopy machine."

Filth Pig was a phenomenal move, artistically speaking. This album once again proved Al's musical versatility and showed that he could thrive not only in electronic chaos or among fast, thrash-driven riffs, but also in a slower, dirtier sound that had a completely different character from the rest of his work. By taking such a risky step, Ministry built upon what they already had and avoided getting stuck in a creative dead end. Moreover, Jourgensen chose to record material that reflected reality as it was and to face commercial suicide head-on in order to remain honest in his art. And isn't that what it's really all about?


THE ALBUM'S VALUE
IN MY
INTERPRETATION

What makes this album so important to me is its brutal honesty. Al exposes his vulnerabilities to the listeners—the ravenous vultures waiting for the next big hit—forcing them to confront the weight that has long lingered behind the scenes, yet remained hidden from the public eye. He never denied his toxic relationship with psychoactive substances, but for a long time he hid from the media just how far it had shattered him. Listening to this record feels like reading someone's private diary, full of anger, frustration with oneself and those around him, and a crippling sense of alienation. It captures the slow, inevitable drift toward madness under the pressure of one's own struggles. I've listened to *Filth Pig* thousands of times, and every single time it grips me just as profoundly.



Alongside honesty, what I admire most in art is rebellion. I am definitely the kind of person who subconsciously gravitates toward artists who embody that, so discovering Ministry felt like a revelation. Next to them, the Sex Pistols seem like a boy band. Al and Paul, from the beginning, have shared the same mindset that never fails to impress me:

Reject labels—they only make you limit yourself.
Don't ever let yourself be pushed into a mold.
Don't give people what they want.

I don't know another band that does things so completely against the grain and still remains this phenomenal. Even if *Filth Pig* took this particular shape because of the circumstances in which it was created, circumstances that inevitably influenced its sound, I am convinced that even under different conditions, Ministry would never have given listeners *Psalm 69* in a new package.

Authenticity often ends in rejection, but things created straight from the heart, rather than dictated by the market, do not need applause. Sooner or later, they always defend themselves and this album is undeniable proof of that.

"Art has to come viscerally, otherwise forget it."
— Al (Los Angeles Times, 1993)
FILTER CIGARETTES
BUSHMILLS
1608
I DON'T
NEED LIFE
I'M HIGH

FILTHPIG FILTHPIG FILTHPIG

In January 2026, *Filth Pig* turned 30. Ministry marked the occasion on April 25 at the Sick New World festival in Las Vegas, performing the album live from front to back. It was a special show for more than one reason: after over twenty years, Paul Barker rejoined the band. The setlist brought back songs that hadn't been played live in decades—and even a few that had never been performed live at all—including *"Brick Windows,"* which finally got its live debut, and *"Useless,"* performed for the first time with Barker on vocals.

Right now, Ministry are wrapping up their final album, created together with Barker. It's set for release in early 2027, after which the band will head out on a farewell world tour and—after more than 45 years—officially call it a day.

Dear AI, your art speaks directly to my soul, and you're the only artist who can move me in quite this way.

Ali(en) ©
Warsaw, Poland
2026

instagram: @ dorzuta
mail: aleksjeskie@gmail.com

MINISTRYFILTHPIGRELOAD2:24FILTHPI
G6:19LAVA6:30CRUMBS4:14USELESS5:
55DEADGUY5:15GAMESHOW7:45THEFA
LL4:54LAYLADYLAY5:44BRICKWINDOW
S5:23PRODUCEDBYHYPOLUXAANDHE
RMESPANFORLUXAPANPRODUCTIONS
MINISTRYAJOURGENSENPBARKERADD
ITIONALPERSONNELRWASHAMLSVITE
KWRIEFLINMSCACCIAENEVAREZSKAT
SOUDASENGINEEREDBYZHUKICBKOP
PLINASSISTANTENGINEERSBGARCELON
JDUFFYMGIBSONETINLEYWOKEEFFEMAN
AGEMENTCRAZEDARTANDDESIGNPELL
EDGEWITHHELPFROMVSAPARTNERSIN
CALLSONGSBYMINISTRYSPURBURNWAR
NERTAMERLANEPUBLISHINGCORPBMIEX
CEPTLAYLADYLAYBYBOBDYLANBIGSKYM
USICASCAPMASTEREDATFUTUREDISCSY
STEMSBYTOMBAKERTHANKSTOCRAZED
TRAXJSCHROEDERMLEBELLARTELOVER
TURFTLEARYAGETTYBKOODADBUFORD
KSTROUDAMACDONNELLDMYERSRIP
JWARDALLOURLOVEJIMNASH©1996W
ARNERBROSRECORDSINCMADEINEU